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ABSTRACT

During the summer of 1980, 27 graduate students (13 Chicano and 14 Anglo) at New Mexico State University participated in a course designed to emphasize 3 areas of awareness relevant to multicultural education: (1) clarification of personal ethnic, cultural, and sex role attitudes and identification; (2) increased sensitivity to ethnic, cultural, and sex role stereotypes and biases and the acquisition of accurate information and realistic understanding of minority groups; (3) recognition of potential areas of bias in existing curricula and the development of strategies for integrating multicultural education in public school curricula. Activities of the course were focused on helping students clarify their attitudes about their own ethnic, cultural, and sex role identification, sharpen their awareness of ethnic and cultural groups, and find strategies for implementing multicultural education. Results of an ethnic literacy test administered the first and last week of the course indicated a gain of more than seven points on the mean score. A recommendation for more courses of this nature was indicated by student feedback and the instructors' comments. (AN)

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Effects of a Multicultural Awareness Course on Teachers of Ethnically Different Students

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Effects of a Multicultural Awareness
Course on Teachers of Ethnically Different Students

Currently one educational issue associated with teacher education is receiving a large amount of press.

The issue devolves from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education's (NCATE) revised standards for determining accreditation of teacher education programs. Incorporated into the standards is a strong multicultural education dimension that is expected to permeate the entire teacher education program.

However, institutionalizing multicultural education programs is easier said than done. There is, for example, a resistance to the concept because of the explosiveness of the topic (Banks, 1977). Multicultural education is an emotional issue that precludes calm and rational discussion among educators. Yet, the importance of multicultural education continues to be lauded by the upper reaches of academe (Freedman & Schoengood, 1980). For example, multicultural education programs now have the support and the stamp of approval from the National Council for the Social Studies (1976).

Once teacher education agencies have accepted the multicultural imperative as a given, they must determine how to operationalize the NCATE standard. Involved in the process are a number of issues. This study addresses only one and that is the area of program. Programmatic reforms need to focus on a clear and acceptable definition of multicultural education. The intent of the standard seems to imply that not only ethnic groups, but other cultural groups determined by religion, sex, role, age, income, nationality, ect. be included.

Teacher educators would probably agree that is impossible to adequately prepare both pre- and in-service teacher to teach children

from all the above groups. Courses can be designed to present information about the major ethnic groups represented by the students in the local schools. Various studies (Baker, 1977: Banks, 1977) have suggested that teachers, regardless of their ethnic background, tend to internalize and perpetuate societal attitudes toward ethnic groups. In order to develop an awareness of these prejudices, teacher education courses need to help teachers clarify their attitudes and perceptions of their own culture and its influence on them. Then they can better begin to understand the concepts of ethnicity and culture. These skills constitute what Glock et al. (1975) calls cognitive sophistication, the characteristic they found to discriminate less bigoted students from more bigoted students.

During the summer of 1980, students were given the opportunity to learn about themselves and others in a multicultural awareness course at New Mexico State University.

The course was designed to emphasize three areas of awareness relevant to multicultural education:

1. Clarification of personal ethnic, cultural and sex role attitudes and identification.
2. Increased sensitivity to ethnic, cultural and sex role stereotypes and biases and the acquisition of accurate information and realistic understanding of minority groups.
3. Recognition of potential areas of bias in existing curricula and the development of strategies for integrating multicultural education into public school curricula.

Subjects:

The subjects were 27 graduate students enrolled in a multicultural

awareness course at New Mexico State University. There were 13 male and 14 female students. Of the male students, six were Chicano and seven were Anglo, five were elementary school teachers and eight were secondary school teachers. Of the female students, seven were Chicana and seven were Anglo, five were elementary school teachers and nine were secondary school teachers. The classroom experience of the subjects ranged from student teaching only to eight years of experience.

Treatment:

Several approaches were used to increase multicultural awareness of students participating in the course. Specific readings were assigned and discussed on Ethnic Groups in American History, Language and Culture, Ethnic Diversity, Sexism in School and Society, and Organizing and Planning the Multiethnic Curriculum. Concepts of ethnicity and culture were explored in discussions. Definitions of relevent terms were arrived at after brain storming in small groups.

A number of activities were designed to focus on helping students clarify their attitudes about their own ethnic, cultural and sex role identification. Questionnaires on ethnic identity and sex role attitudes were administered and discussed. Attitudes toward other minority groups were discussed in relation to readings and responses to attitude surveys.

Awareness of ethnic and cultural groups was another focus of the course. Educators and community people, six individuals and one panel of eight, were invited to share their knowledge of specific ethnic and cultural groups and to discuss their personal experiences as members of minority groups. The students themselves presented films and film strips

on the history and culture of various ethnic groups. Other activities included role playing, observing and analyzing non-verbal behavior, and researching the history and culture of minority groups.

A third focus of the course was on strategies for the implementation of multicultural education. An analysis of the personal cognitive learning styles of the students was followed by discussion of the cultural and sex differences in cognitive styles. An example of a multicultural curriculum was presented by a local teacher. Student projects which included multicultural activities for the classroom were shared. Each student developed a resource list of community people who could contribute to a multicultural education program. Finally, classroom texts and readers were analyzed for sex role stereotyping.

Descriptive Statistics:

An ethnic literacy test was administered the first and last week of the course. There are thirty-eight true or false items on the test. The items have to do with basic factual content relevant to minority groups in the United States.

All of the material covered by the test was presented to the students during the course.

The results of the pre and post tests are shown in figures 1, 2, and 3.

Figure 1. Mean Scores for Total Group

Pre Test	Post Test
22.3	29.8

Figure 2. Mean Scores for Males and Females

	Pre Test	Post Test
Males	22.4	32.8
Females	22.2	27.8

Figure 3. Mean Scores for Chicanos and Anglos

	Pre Test	Post Test
Chicanos	21.8	29.7
Anglos	22.5	30.6

In the pre test the mean scores for all groups were within 1 point of each other indicating that the background knowledge of all the individuals was relatively comparable. The post test showed a gain of more than seven points on the mean.

The males showed the greatest difference between the pre and post mean scores. The pre and post mean score difference between Chicanos and Anglos appears to be insignificant.

The results would seem to indicate some increase in awareness of the historical facts related to minority groups within the United States.

Recommendations and Implications:

Based on student feedback and the instructors' sense of personal efficacy, a recommendation for more courses of this nature would seem to be indicated.

In order to determine whether or not the self-reported changes in students' attitudes and awareness influence their teaching behaviors, longitudinal studies need to be implemented.

The components of any exemplary multicultural course should include, in addition to factual information, content appropriate to the development of cognitive sophistication. Skills that constitute this characteristic include the ability to analyze, generalize and appropriately apply the concepts of ethnicity, culture, and the understanding of intergroup perceptions.

The course offered at New Mexico State University for public school teachers attempted to provide experiences that would enable students to implement multicultural education by:

1. Clarifying their rationale for multicultural education
2. Improving their ability to interact with culturally different students
3. Developing cultural awareness in their own classrooms
4. Influencing others concerning multicultural education

Courses which provide teachers with opportunities to increase their knowledge and develop positive attitudes relevant to cultural diversity are essential for educational equity in today's pluralistic world.

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